

**Illinois History**  
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## **The Early Political Career of Abraham Lincoln**

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Although Lincoln is most well known for his actions as president during the Civil War, it is also important to know something about his roots and his early experiences in politics.

Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, in Larue County, Kentucky to Thomas and Nancy Lincoln. Although Lincoln was mainly self taught, he had about 18 months of formal education. In 1831, Lincoln left his family's newly established homestead in Coles County, Illinois and settled in New Salem, Illinois. His early political career began soon after in 1832.

That year, Lincoln announced he was running for the general assembly in New Salem. On March 9, 1832, he published a circular outlining his views and principles. At the age of 23, it was less than eloquent. Referring to the circular, Barton states that "The remarkable fact is, not that his letter announcing his candidacy was a crude performance, but that it was not far more crude." Soon after this announcement, the Black Hawk War began. Instead of campaigning, Lincoln joined the militia and was elected as captain. Lincoln served for a few months but never saw action. Shortly before the election, the war ended and Lincoln returned and began campaigning. With little time to campaign, he was unable to raise an adequate number of votes. Even though he lost the election, he was awarded the position of postmaster of New Salem. He graciously accepted and earned the nickname Honest Abe for his behavior.

Lincoln ran for election again in 1834. Even though he was in a Democratic county, Lincoln firmly committed himself to a Whig platform. That fact that he won

speaks to his character. During his time in office, he dedicated himself to national improvement through transportation and trade. When his term ended, Lincoln ran for reelection in 1836. During his campaign, Lincoln demonstrated his abilities through multiple speeches and gained the support of both Democrats and Whigs. Once again, Lincoln won a position in the legislature and served two more years without incident. About that time, Lincoln created successful law partnerships in Springfield with John Stuart, Stephen Logan, and William Herndon. After his last term in the legislature, Lincoln remained active in politics and was eventually elected to congress. During his time there, he condemned the Mexican American War. This outraged many. With a new family, Lincoln thought about focusing on his law career but was still unsure. With the urging of his friends, he retired from politics, hoping to avoid further damage.

Lincoln left his successful law practice and returned to politics with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. This new act helped promote slavery by nullifying the Missouri Compromise by allowing new states to choose whether they would be slave states or not. Until this point, Lincoln had avoided openly discussing his views on slavery. In his campaign for senator, Lincoln best illustrated his beliefs during the famous Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858. During the debates, Lincoln stated that he believed that, although slaves may not be . . . equal in moral or intellectual endowment . . . in the right to eat bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.” Through this and other statements, Lincoln made public his beliefs that slaves should have equal rights. Although Douglas won the election for senator, Lincoln became the

figurehead for the new Republican Party. He was also poised to become the Republican candidate for president.

These early political occurrences did not elevate Lincoln in the minds of the people because of sweeping reforms or policies. Lincoln did not usher in far-reaching reforms until later in his career. He won followers in both political parties because of his eloquent speeches and honorable character. They felt he was “the candidate of pride, wealth, and aristocratic family distinction.” His time in the legislature provided Lincoln great political experience and put him in a position to become the Republican presidential candidate. He would need this experience when he eventually won the presidency as well as when he confronted the conflicts that emerged during his time in office. [From William Barton, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*; R. D. Monroe, “Debating Douglas on the National Stage, 1857-1858” <<http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/biography7.html>>. (Oct. 14, 2008); “President Abraham Lincoln 1809-1865” <<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h837.html>>. (Oct. 15, 2008); Charles Stanley, “Setting the Scene: A look behind the Lincoln and Douglas Debates” <<http://mywebtimes.com/archives/ottawa/display.php?id=365197>>. (Oct. 14, 2008); and Johnson Washington, “Early Political Career” <<http://www.presidentprofiles.com/Washington-Johnson/Abraham-Lincoln-Early-political-career.html>>. (Oct. 15, 2008).]

## **“He’ll Never Come To Much”**

Molly Cowgill  
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Abraham Lincoln is one of the most revered and prestigious persons in United States history. Americans admire him immensely for his hard work, dedication and honesty. Sometimes though, it is hard to believe that a president so revered had a very typical upbringing.

Abraham was born in a crude one-room log cabin surrounded by a 348-acre farm on February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. He was welcomed into the world by his mother, Nancy, his father, Thomas, and his two year old sister, Sarah. After Abraham was born, his mother gave birth to another child, but he died in infancy.

His cousin, Dennis Hanks, ran all the way to the Lincoln’s cabin when he heard Abe had been born. He held Abe, but the baby soon began crying. “Take him!” Dennis said to his aunt, “He’ll never come (amount) to much!”

After living in Kentucky for two years, Abe and his family moved to another farm, Knob Creek, about ten miles away. This is where Lincoln had his earliest childhood recollections.

As a young boy, Lincoln was very quiet. His cousin, Dennis Hanks described him as a “Bashful, somewhat dull, but peaceable boy,” much like his mother. Abe was also intellectually inclined. He first attended school when he was six, and continued to attend school off and on until he was fifteen years old.

In 1816, when Lincoln was seven, his family moved to Indiana. Not long after, tragedies met up with him when an aunt and uncle died. Even more tragedy came when

his mother died in 1818. After enduring an entire year without a wife, Thomas married Sarah Bush, a family friend who was also a widow.

Along with Lincoln's new mother, he also gained three more siblings. Abe's cousin Dennis, who had just lost his mother and father joined with the Lincoln family, making a total of eight family members.

Abe and his new mother bonded instantly. In Sarah's old age she talked to others about Abe, "He was the best boy I ever saw. I never gave him a cross word in all my life." Lincoln's mother encouraged him not only to read, but also to write. Abe would read anything that he could find. He often lay by the fire when his family was sound asleep and wrote down parts of the book that he wanted to memorize. Believe it or not, he would also practice arithmetic by writing on the fire shovel!

By the time Abe was fifteen years old, he stood almost six feet tall. People often commented about his long legs and unbelievable strength. Many said that Lincoln was the best worker in the state of Indiana. It is said that he once picked up a 600 lb. chicken coop and placed it on its new foundation. However, others said he was the laziest worker since he would always stop what he was working on to tell a story or just to say hello to those walking down the street. Of course, Lincoln had something to say about that, "My father taught me to work, but he never taught me to love it."

Unlike many of his peers, Abe often took a book with him when he went to work in the fields. After he returned from a day's work, he read once again. Abe was often heard saying, "My best friend is the man who'll get me a book I ain't read."

Abe rarely read for pleasure, but would often read for information and explanation of politics and American history. After attending Sunday services, Abe

could recite the preacher's sermon word for word, or entertain his peers for hours at a time with his stories. At this time, thrilling new books such as *Aesop's Fables* and *Robinson Crusoe* also caught Lincoln's interest.

Some thought there was not a person who could match Lincoln's mind. His mind did not leap straight to solutions, but he struggled with and pondered his ideas. In fact, Abe himself described his mind as, "very hard to scratch anything on it and almost impossible after you get it there to rub it off."

As Lincoln aged, it became more evident that he would "come to much," contrary to what his cousin thought when Lincoln was born. Abe became stronger, wiser, and even kinder with every passing day. People who knew Abe grew to love him for his honesty and his good heart. Even now, in the two-hundredth-year of his birthday, Americans still revere him because of his intelligence, fairness, and perseverance.

In later years, Abe became a lawyer, and then eventually President of the United States, making a mark not only in the history books but in generations to come. In 1865, Lincoln was taken from this world by an assassin. [From Roy Edgar Appleman, *Abraham Lincoln From His Own Words and Contemporary Accounts*; David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*; Ruth Belov Gross, *True Stories About Abraham Lincoln*; Phillip B. Kunhardt, Jr., Phillip B. Kunhardt, III, Peter W. Kunhardt, *Lincoln*; Stefan Lorant, *The Life Of Abraham Lincoln*; and Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln*.]



## **Abraham Lincoln in New Salem**

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Abraham Lincoln is known as a great leader, a man of integrity, and a man of honesty. He was the sixteenth president: he freed slaves, and he was president during the Civil War. The years in New Salem were instrumental in forming him into a leader.

On February 12, 1819, Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky. In 1831, at the age of twenty two, he left his parents to sail down the Sangamon River with his friend John Hanks and his step brother John Johnston. They had been hired by Denton Offutt, a colorful man of the frontier, to take produce to New Orleans. On his way he encountered New Salem, and this is where Abe Lincoln had experiences that would help him become a great leader.

On his way to New Salem, his raft became stuck on the mill dam. He borrowed a tool from the shop to drill a hole in the raft, so that the water would empty from the raft. Abraham Lincoln impressed Offutt, the clerk, by the way he freed his raft from the milldam. Offutt was so impressed that he offered Abraham Lincoln a job at his store.

Since the store was not open when Lincoln got back from New Orleans, Lincoln decided to pilot a steamboat down the river to Beardstown until the store opened. Offutt began to brag about how strong Abe Lincoln was, and how he could throw any man in New Salem. Jack Armstrong, the local strongman, was not going to tolerate this. Jack challenged Lincoln to a wrestling match. Neither man could throw the other, but Lincoln was declared the winner.

Lincoln wanted to learn math and grammar. He asked Mentor Graham, the school master, to teach him math and grammar, and loaned books for him to read. He was industrious.

Lincoln threw his hat in the ring for state legislature. Black Hawk soon interrupted Lincoln's campaign. Lincoln volunteered to join the local militia to fight in the Black Hawk Indian War. His company voted him captain of their group. He was a natural leader. Lincoln re-enlisted three more times, but saw no action. Lincoln said, "We fought off more mosquitoes than we did Indians." Lincoln earned one hundred and twenty five dollars for three months service. In 1832 Lincoln lost the election. Some people like to say it was only because of the Indian war.

To raise money, Lincoln began to do chores from house to house, while swapping stories and getting votes. William F. Berry and Abraham Lincoln became business partners. They were not doing too well selling merchandise together. Much of the inventory bought from other merchants was liquor, which Lincoln made no effort to sell. Nothing Berry said to encourage selling liquor would change Lincoln's mind. William F. Berry died, which left Lincoln in what he called the "National Debt." To help pay off his debt, Lincoln took the postmaster job. Although the pay was little, he was able to read dozens of newspapers every week. He was also a deputy surveyor. He used both offices from which to campaign for the legislature.

Lincoln ran for state legislature again in 1834 and won this time. He was then able to pay off the large debt. This is one of the many reasons people called Abraham Lincoln, "Honest Abe."

Lincoln was only in New Salem for seven years. In 1837, Lincoln moved to Springfield to become a lawyer. In 1861, he became the president of the United States. Abraham Lincoln showed honesty by paying off the large debt. He demonstrated his industrious side with jobs, such as postmaster and surveyor. Abe learned how to teach himself without having the opportunity to go to school. His company recognized him as a leader in the Black Hawk Indian War. All these traits that were evident during Abraham Lincoln's time in New Salem were important in making him the great leader he became. [From Philip Kunhardt, Jr., Philip Kunhardt, III, and Peter Kunhardt, *Lincoln*; Stefan Lorant, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*; The National Park Service; *Lincoln's New Salem Days*, <http://www.nps.gov/archive/liho/newsalem.htm> (Sept. 11, 2008); and Susan Sloate, *Abraham Lincoln the Freedom President*.]

## **Abraham Lincoln**

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Many people know who Abraham Lincoln is and have a general understanding of what he did while he was in office, but this is the extent of their knowledge. Many of Lincoln's greatest achievements occurred before he was in office; Lincoln did everything from write political satires to rise through the ranks of the Illinois bar. Throughout his life, Lincoln achieved numerous feats, and it is a shame that he is only recognized for the few he completed while in office.

Even when Lincoln was a youth, he was intelligent. His mother had taught him to read and write at a young age. When he lived in Indiana with his father, after the death of his mother, he wrote speeches, political satires, etc. His satires, though "not refined, were very stinging," according to the historian Henry Ketcham. At the age of 21, Lincoln and his family had moved to Illinois, for fear of catching the "milk sickness" in Indiana. When Lincoln came into manhood, he had not committed any crimes, he had no vices, and was a very respectable person. Years later, in 1831, Lincoln had been selected to go down to New Orleans and sell merchandise from a manufacturer in the area. On the way down to New Orleans his boat became stuck in the river. Lincoln then designed a mechanism that got boats "un-stuck" and patented it, this patent brought him no riches, but it was a very crafty invention. Once Lincoln was assaulted and played no foul; however, when the crowd became angry and started to gang up on him, he did not fight back. After this incident, Lincoln became the town hero and the general peacemaker.

When Lincoln was a practicing lawyer in Illinois, he was a very respectable one. He never went for the theatrics, never made exaggerated gestures. Lincoln participated in many cases, one of which was *Bailey v. Cromwell*. In this case, Lincoln defended “an indentured black girl, Nance, in Tazewell County, where she was sold by one white man to another.” Because slavery was illegal in Illinois, Lincoln had persuaded the jury that, in Illinois, it was illegal to sell a free being, regardless of race. The jury eventually agreed and the girl was set free. In a similar case, where Lincoln defended Robert Matson, he defended the slave-owner. In this case he lost, but these cases certainly made Lincoln’s mind up about slavery. He once said that “slavery has the power of making me miserable.”

From 1830 to 1860, Lincoln did various jobs, ranging from storekeeper to senator. In this time, he never forgot about slavery. He fought against it vigorously in Congress claiming that it was “founded on both injustice and bad policy.” However, he opposed the spread of abolition societies. In his time as a lawyer, he steadily rose to first rank on the Illinois bar. When Lincoln was in Congress, he opposed the Mexican-American War and was criticized for it back at home. He was not re-elected. After five years of being out of the political limelight, Lincoln decided to re-emerge due to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and debate with Stephen Douglas. Lincoln was clearly a man who stuck to his beliefs.

In his time before becoming president, Abraham Lincoln accomplished many things. It is obvious that he is a great man and deserving of the attention given to him, but he should also be recognized for what he did before elected. He was a magnificent lawyer, a firm believer, and was incredibly smart. Abraham Lincoln should be

recognized for all that he has accomplished, not just the tip of the iceberg. [From Henry Ketcham, *The Life of Lincoln*, 2003 <<http://www.authorama.com/life-of-abraham-lincoln-1.html>> (Oct. 15, 2008); “Lincoln spent 6 important years. . .” *Political Career 1830-1860*, <<http://www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/political.htm>> (Oct. 16, 2008); and “When Abraham Lincoln was born. . .” *The Lincoln Legacy*, 2006 <<http://www.thelincolnlegacy.org/timeline/speaker.htm>> (Oct. 15, 2008).]

## **The Emergence of the Republican Party and Abraham Lincoln**

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Entrenched in American politics is the Republican Party, the party of Lincoln, the “Grand Old Party.” The ideology of the pre-contemporary Republican Party was much different than that of the party we know today. At its start, the Republican Party consisted of, for that time, radical ideas such as distribution of western governmental lands without charge and the abolition of slavery. Formed in 1854, the Republican Party has been at the center of American politics for more than a century and a half.

The Republican Party formed primarily as opposition to the Democratic Party. It consisted mainly of antislavery Whigs, whose party had dissolved by the end of 1854 due to conflict over the issue of slavery, the work of anti-slavery Democrats, and members of the Free-Soil Party. The latter had organized in 1848 to oppose the extension of slavery into the territories then recently acquired from Mexico. The central focus of this newly-formed political party became the abolition of slavery, an issue which aided the Republican Party in gaining recognition and support from the North. Before the Republicans could become a formidable rival to the Democrats, however, they needed to eliminate another rival anti-slavery group, the American Party, or the Know-Nothings, who were anti-immigration and anti-Roman Catholic as well as anti-slavery. The decline of the Know-Nothings removed an appealing alternative for voters dissatisfied with the Democrats and their policies, therefore, it attracted voters the Republicans needed in order for them to become a viable national party. With the death of the American Party in 1855-1856, the Republicans became the main abolitionist party in the United States.

The election of 1856 was not a success for the Republicans, yet the party was satisfied with its strong presence in the North. They looked forward to the 1860 election with much anticipation.

During 1857 conditions favored the emergence of the new Republican Party. On March 6, the Supreme Court ruled in the Dred Scott case that Congress lacked the power to ban slavery from the territories. This intensified Republican fears that the Southern slave states, through a court ruling, might legalize slavery nationwide. The battle over a free Kansas versus one that embraced slavery split the Democrats between the forces of Stephen A. Douglas and President James Buchanan. The Buchanan administration generally supported Southerners' taking slaves into Kansas and establishing the institution of slavery there. In this, Republicans saw a conspiracy to nationalize bondage. A severe economic downturn began in October 1857, causing a depression that lasted for four years, only adding to the woes of the Democrats.

Confidently, Republicans awaited the congressional elections of 1858. To take advantage of the public concern from economically difficult times, the party supported a protective tariff and homestead legislation to encourage western settlement. With the tide of events running their way, the Republicans made important gains. Doing well in valuable states such as Pennsylvania and winning victories in New York and Ohio made it clear that the party was attracting conservative voters from the North.

The election of 1858 also brought about the rise of Abraham Lincoln. He was a former Whig who turned Republican after his party died out in 1854 and ran against Stephen A. Douglas in the Illinois senatorial election. Although he lost the election, the seven legendary debates in which the two opposed each other contributed greatly to



Lincoln's political status and propelled him towards a nomination as the Republican Presidential candidate of 1860. On the other hand, the apparent choice, William H. Seward of New York, was already well-known for the anti-slavery cause. Yet Seward's criticism of nativism alienated former Know-Nothings. As a result, his shortcomings made many Republicans believe that he could not win the five northern states that went to Buchanan and the Democrats in 1856. Winning those states would be essential to Republican victory in the upcoming election.

By contrast, Lincoln was strong in the areas where Seward was not. Although Lincoln opposed the Know-Nothings, he had not said much to estrange them. He would be able to carry Illinois and Pennsylvania where Seward could not. Lincoln appeared sound on his position against slavery without the appearance of radicalism that Seward possessed.

By the spring of 1860, the Republican Party was looking for a nominee with a broad appeal. Lincoln proved to be that person when the convention at Chicago in May nominated him. The Republicans, standing on a platform that supported a protective tariff, a homestead law, internal improvements and the construction of a Pacific railroad, were endeavoring to appeal to a broader spectrum of voters.

When the Democratic split ensued, everything paid off for the Republicans. Lincoln, although winning less than forty percent of the popular vote, took all of the northern states except New Jersey, which he split with Douglas. Astonishingly, Lincoln earned 180 electoral votes to the combined total of 123 votes for his three opponents. Abraham Lincoln, winning the 1860 presidential election, became the first Republican president elected, a monumental achievement for a party founded only six years before.

The Republican Party, Lincoln's party, began as a liberal, anti-slavery party and has evolved into one of political and social conservatism. Republicans have helped the way Americans live together in this democracy. Without Lincoln's association, the Republican Party may not have endured as one of the greatest and most prominent parties in American history. [From Joyce Appleby, et al. *The American Journey*; Lewis L. Gould, *Grand Old Party*; The History Channel, "The Republican Party," <<http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=220541>> (Nov. 17, 2008); The History Channel, "The Democratic Party," <<http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=207371>> (Nov. 17, 2008); The History Channel, "The Democratic-Republican Party," <<http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?vendorId=FWNE.fw..de035500.a#FWNE.fw..de035500.a>> (Nov. 17, 2008); The History Channel, "The Whig Party," <<http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?vendorId=FWNE.fw..wh039800.a#FWNE.fw..wh039800.a>> (Nov. 17, 2008); The History Channel, "The Free-Soil Party," <<http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?vendorId=FWNE.fw..fr082400.a#FWNE.fw..fr082400.a>> (Nov. 17, 2008); The History Channel, "The Know-Nothings," <<http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?vendorId=FWNE.fw..kn045800.a#FWNE.fw..kn045800.a>> (Nov. 17, 2008); and The Republican National Committee, "GOP History," <<http://www.gop.com/About/AboutRead.aspx?Guid=a747a888-0ae6-4441-94f4-2a3a6561f872>> (Nov. 10, 2008).]

## **Abraham Lincoln's Vision of the Reconstruction**

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Although a great deal is known about Lincoln's role in the Civil War, many are unfamiliar with his plans for the Reconstruction. This may be due, in part, to his assassination before he could carry out his plans to repair and rebuild a nation left ravaged by the Civil War.

Lincoln had called the Reconstruction, "The greatest question ever presented to practical statesmanship." Lincoln knew that he would have to face one of the most difficult dilemmas in the history of this country. He believed that the best way to heal the country was to quickly reassemble the former Union and make peace with the Confederacy. His plan called for a more gentle approach than was proposed by other parties of the day, specifically, the radical Republicans'. He designed a system that he hoped would convince the rebellious states to renounce their allegiance with the Confederacy and rejoin the Union. Under his program, all Southerners, except those who had held high-ranking Confederate offices, could swear an oath that pledged future loyalty to the Union and acknowledged the end of slavery to get their rights restored along with a full pardon. Lincoln thought this would dishearten the South enough that it would surrender and give up the fight. When ten percent of the total population of the state had taken the oath, the citizens of that state would be able to vote to change their state's government and constitution to honor the Emancipation Proclamation. Once the state's new anti-slavery government and constitution were created and ratified, the seceded state could be fully re-admitted to the Union.

Even before his death, Lincoln's plan had already begun losing support with Northerners. They believed his plan was not strict enough to properly deal with and punish the South. Others complained that, under his plan, blacks were not permitted to swear the oath of loyalty to the Union, nor were they granted the rights to vote or hold office.

Even though, when he assumed the presidency in 1865, Andrew Johnson intended to further the Reconstruction as Lincoln might have desired, he made some unpopular changes to Lincoln's plan. Under Johnson's plan, he would appoint governors for the rebellious states. Johnson allowed the governors that he had selected to appoint members to their administrations that had very strong Southern ideals, a direct contradiction to Lincoln's ideals. The new Southern governments then enacted a system of laws, called the Black Codes, in an attempt to undermine the federal authority and the Emancipation Proclamation by restricting blacks' rights and imposing harsh taxes on those who did not continue working as plantation laborers.

By December 1865, many Republicans in Congress had come to the conclusion that Andrew Johnson's agenda for Reconstruction desperately needed modification. Consequently, Congress passed a bill to extend the length of the Freedmen's Bureau, as well as the Civil Rights Bill, to aid the ailing reconstruction program. President Johnson subsequently vetoed both bills. Radical and moderate Republicans in Congress responded in outrage to Johnson's vetoes by forming a coalition, overriding the vetoes and initiating the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Following the elections of 1866, Congress effectively eliminated all of Johnson's control over Reconstruction and ratified the Fourteenth Amendment. They passed the Reconstruction Acts, which divided

the Southern states into military districts, giving control of constitutional conventions to the Union's military commanders. Congressional control and harsh policy led to a prolonged timeline of Reconstruction, resulting in violent attacks against blacks and white Republicans in the South, contrary to Abraham Lincoln's vision of an expedited recovery from the Civil War.

Our sixteenth President's valiant effort to restore peace to the land he loved most was interrupted as the result of an assassin's bullet. Lincoln did not live long enough to implement his plan fully. It has taken nearly 150 years for America to rise above racism and infringement on African American civil rights. We have recently elected our first African American President, a historic moment in America's history. Perhaps if Lincoln had been able to remain President, rather than Andrew Johnson, some of the suffering may have been avoided. [From "Andrew Johnson." Whitehouse.gov. The White House. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/aj17.html> (Nov. 19, 2008); Joyce

Appleby, Alan Brinkley, and James M. McPherson, *The American Journey*; Mark M. Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary*; David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*; William E. Gienapp, *Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America*; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*; and "Reconstruction." History.com. The History Channel. <http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=220403> (Nov. 9, 2008).]

## **Lincoln as a Lawyer**

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Abraham Lincoln is remembered by many people in America for his accomplishments as president. However, his years as a lawyer are less well known. He worked as a lawyer for years before his nomination in 1860 to the presidency. He went through three law partners in this time and worked on many cases. He learned many legal and political principles during this career, which helped him in his later years.

Lincoln was not well educated as a child, but as a young man, he sought more education. He worked as a part-time legislator and considered a career in law. He studied law books borrowed from Springfield attorney John T. Stuart. He was licensed to practice law in 1836 and became a junior partner of Stuart in 1837. When that partnership ended in 1841, he joined Stephen T. Logan. After ending his partnership with Logan on amicable terms in 1845, Lincoln took William H. Herndon as his own junior partner. Lincoln and Herndon practiced together until Lincoln left for the White House. Their partnership continued to exist, at least in name, until Lincoln's death. Despite having studied law, Lincoln was apparently not an expert in certain points of law. Logan always wanted him to pay attention to the details of the law and court processes. His partners said he seemed to learn more through experience. Herndon stated that his partner "was a good lawyer but . . . 'strikingly deficient in the technical rules of law.'"

Most of Lincoln's work took place in county seats of Illinois, not in Springfield. He was able to win over some small town juries because he grew up in a rural area. He spoke slowly, used witty anecdotes that related to the situation, and presented his

arguments in a straightforward way. He tended to use metaphors based on the rural life he knew. An example of his use of farm-related comparisons is in *Fleming vs. Rogers & Crothers*. In this medical malpractice case, Lincoln used chicken bones to demonstrate the effect age had on how bones heal. “This graphic demonstration had the desired effect on some of the jurors, the majority of whom probably entered the courtroom . . . prejudiced against the more affluent defendants,” according to Charles Hubbard. His sense of humor also won Lincoln friends such as Judge David Davis. The judge respected his opinions and skills, as well as his ability to entertain him and the other lawyers who followed his circuit. “Davis had Lincoln act as judge several times in the 1850s.” Younger attorneys also respected Lincoln because of his experience and reputation.

The majority of Lincoln’s cases dealt with debt collection. He won more often as a plaintiff attorney in these cases because the legal system favored creditors. He also handled cases dealing with inheritance, patents, and railroads, and occasionally acted as state’s attorney pro tem in criminal cases. However, he did not seek a state’s attorney position. In fact, “Lincoln personally did not aspire to any judicial or legal offices,” to quote from the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. He suspended his practice of law several times in order to pursue his political career. He combined the two careers in a few instances, including arguing a case during his term in Congress. When he won the 1860 presidential election, he stopped practicing law, but he asked Herndon to leave their partnership sign as it was. He wanted clients to know that “the election of a President makes no change in the firm of Lincoln and Herndon,” according to the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. If he returned, he wanted to resume his law career.

Lincoln made many achievements as a president, but his legal career was also important. He stated his views even before being elected, such as his beliefs about slavery. “Slavery was wrong, he argued . . . ‘When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself, and also governs another man, that is . . . despotism.’” He made his opinions heard, and although he was always widely respected, he gained enough respect to become President of the United States.

Everything he had learned throughout his law career helped him to gain that power.

[From “Abraham Lincoln.” *Lawyer Hall of Fame*.

<<http://www.fansoffieger.com/lincoln.htm>>. (Oct. 14, 2008); “Abraham Lincoln and the Law.” *Abraham Lincoln’s Classroom*.

<<http://www.abrahamlincolnsclassroom.org/Library/newsletter.asp?ID=135&CRLI-191>>. (Oct. 14, 2008); The Papers of Abraham Lincoln. “The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln: A Narrative Overview.” *The Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln*. 2006, 2008.

<<http://www.lawpracticeofabrahamlincoln.org/Reference.aspx?ref=NarrativeOverview.html>>. (Oct. 14, 2008); and Steve Sheinkin, *Two Miserable Presidents: Everything Your Schoolbooks Didn’t Tell You About the Civil War*.]



## **Lincoln's First Year in Springfield**

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Lincoln was a well known man in American history. He was greatly known for his presidency, his service in the Black Hawk War, and also his time in the Illinois legislature. A time in his life that was not widely known was his first year in Springfield attempting to become a lawyer. In his year of service in Springfield, the new capitol of Illinois, Lincoln's life was pretty rough. He did, however, make new friends very easily and kept close relations. In Springfield, he gained the valuable experience of being a partner in a law firm, even though at times his partner was distracted from law.

Lincoln moved to Springfield in the spring of 1837. Lincoln chose to move to Springfield because the capitol of Illinois had just been moved to Springfield, and he thought that it would have a great need for new lawyers there. He arrived in Springfield with next to nothing except for the dream of succeeding as a lawyer. As Lincoln's close friend Joshua Speed described, Lincoln "had ridden into town on a borrowed horse," taking along with him "no earthly property save a pair of saddle bags containing a few clothes." Speed owned a store where Lincoln stopped to purchase a bed with the proper sheets and blankets for it. When the total of these items came to a mere seventeen dollars, young Lincoln asked for it to be put on credit until Christmas. Then, Speed, perhaps feeling so badly for Lincoln, offered to share his room above the shop. Lincoln walked up the flight of stairs, and upon seeing the room which was offered, set down his bags and came back down to thank the young shopkeeper. The two shared this same room above the shop for the following five years.

Lincoln quickly made friends, and Speed's store "served as a head quarters for Lincoln and a congenial group" of men who "discussed all sorts of questions from politics to religion; according to Rexford Newcomb. These new friendships helped Lincoln through a difficult first year in Springfield. Even though he never seemed to be a part of the elite crowd, he still loved practicing law.

Lincoln had made the move to Springfield to start his career in law. After his service in the Black Hawk War, a comrade named John T. Stuart offered Lincoln a partnership in a new law firm. The work for lawyers was less than Lincoln anticipated. Page Eaton describes Lincoln's despair by sharing Lincoln had "come to my (Eaton's) shop one day . . . and said he had the notion to quit studying law and learn carpeting." To make matters worse, Stuart did not seem totally committed. He "was just recovering from the effects of a congressional race in which he had been a loser," according to Newcomb. Stuart, therefore, "was still deeply absorbed in politics, not giving to the law his undivided time," Newcomb went on. Stuart's distraction gave Lincoln more responsibility in the little law office. Lincoln was forced to develop more cases by himself. Even though this caused more work for Lincoln, in the long run, it helped Lincoln learn more responsibility and have a deeper understanding of his profession as a lawyer.

The Stuart-Lincoln law firm was located across the street from the present day court house square in Springfield. The county court was held on the first floor of the building. On top was the Stuart-Lincoln office. It contained sparse furniture including "a small lounge or bed, a chair containing a buffalo robe, a hard wooden bench, a feeble

attempt at a book case, and a table which answered for a desk,” according to Newcomb. The law firm could only afford the bare necessities.

Lincoln was reelected to the Illinois Congress in 1838 and could not devote all of his time to law any longer. Through his time in Congress, his partnership with Stuart lasted until 1844. Lincoln survived his first year living in Springfield with great friends and a small law firm. He was a great man who will not soon be forgotten in American history. [From Francis Browne, *The Every-Day Life of Abraham Lincoln*; “The History Place Presents A. Lincoln.” 1996. The History Place

<<http://www.historyplace.com/lincoln/>> (Sept. 9, 2008); Rexford Newcomb, *In the Lincoln Country*; and David Plowden, *Lincoln and His America: 1809*

## **Abraham Lincoln**

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Abraham Lincoln achieved a good deal during his life. When Lincoln first began in politics, he started in a little town called New Salem. Lincoln accomplished various tasks when he first started. One in particular, was when he was selected to be one of the captains during a war between the Americans and the Sac and Fox tribes for territorial land. This accomplishment led him to gain recognition across Illinois.

Around 1831, Lincoln's father decided to pick up their lives again, but Lincoln decided it was time to branch off and start his own life. He decided to settle in a little town called New Salem, Illinois. When he first arrived there his first job was as a clerk in the Offutt store. In the store, he got to know numerous people living in New Salem.

Once April began, Chief Black Hawk and his two tribes, the Sac and Fox, crossed the Mississippi River to "plant" corn. The Indians' arrival made many people panic. Governor Reynolds asked for volunteers to help him get the Indians back on their side of the Mississippi River. Lincoln saw that his employer was failing; so, he decided to enlist in the militia for 30 days. Each company in the militia had to pick a captain of their choice. Lincoln was chosen to be the captain of his company. Most of the men in Lincoln's company were from New Salem, and a huge majority of them chose Lincoln. "Then came the Black-Hawk war; and I was elected a Captain of Volunteers -- a success which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since," Lincoln said later. After the Black Hawk War was over, Lincoln had enlisted in the militia two more times, for another 30 days. Not once did Lincoln see any fighting during the war.

When Lincoln arrived back to New Salem after the Black Hawk War, he started campaigning for the state legislature in the August election. He traveled to many towns to speak about himself. Pappsville was one of the towns that asked Lincoln to come and speak to them. He said, "Fellow citizens, I presume you all know who I am-I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by many friends to become a candidate for the legislature. My policies are short and sweet, like the old woman's dance. I am in favor of a National Bank, I am in favor of the Internal improvement system, and a high protective tariff. These are my sentiments and political principles. If elected I shall be thankful; and if not, it will be all the same."

Lincoln lost the election in 1832, but he gained an enthusiasm for politics that would stay with him. "I am glad I made the late race. It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age, which I could have had in no other way; and though I now sink out of view, and shall be forgotten, I believe I have made some marks which will tell for the cause of civil liberty long after I am gone." In the election there had been 13 candidates and 8,315 votes. Lincoln had received 675 votes during the August election. New Salem had 300 votes, and 277 of those votes leaned to Lincoln. The war helped Lincoln become a better leader, and helped him get that much closer to becoming an idol for his entire fellow Americans. [From Mike Ballard, "Lincoln's New Salem Days." *The National Parks Service*. August 1998

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/liho/newsalem.htm> (Sept. 10, 2008.); Roy P. Basler, "Lincoln." *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 1995.

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## **Lincoln's Service in the Black Hawk War**

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Abraham Lincoln is well known in America and around the world, but few are aware that he served in a war. Abraham Lincoln served as a Captain in the Thirty-first Regiment of Militia of Sangamon County, First Division during the Black Hawk war in northern Illinois.

The Black Hawk War was a war fought against the Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo tribes. On April 5, 1832, a group of roughly a thousand Indian men, women, and children crossed the Mississippi River into Illinois near the mouth of the Iowa River. The leader of this band was Black Hawk, a sixty-five year old Sauk warrior. They were attempting to return to their homelands, unable to comprehend land treaties that restricted them from their former homes, cities, and lands. The Indians did not seek a war, but wanted only to live in freedom and peace on their former land.

Lincoln joined the militia with several friends from New Salem and Clary's Grove and formed a mounted infantry company. The volunteers met at the farm of Dallas Scott in April, 1832. Lincoln and William Kirkpatrick, a local sawmill owner were nominated for captain of the company. When Lincoln and Kirkpatrick stood in front of the men, two thirds of them got behind Lincoln, casting their votes for him.

Lincoln was inexperienced as a military leader, but he still attempted to keep order and discipline in the group of rowdy men. He did not hesitate to threaten physical force to keep order. One story tells of an old Indian who happened to wander into the men's camp. When the men wanted to kill the Indian as a spy, Lincoln stood up in front

of the men and challenged anyone who hurt the innocent Indian to a fight. The men then let the Indian slip away.

Most important about Lincoln's experience in the Black Hawk War was that he gained tactical knowledge and became acquainted with military life. Lincoln's company never saw battle in the Black Hawk War. Later, when talking about the war, Lincoln said, "I had a good many bloody struggles with the mosquitoes, and ... I can truly say I was often very hungry."

Although his rank as captain was something Lincoln was said to have been very proud of, he was discharged from his command on May 27. He re-enlisted in Captain Elijah Iles' company as a private, and afterward served as a private in Captain Jacob Earley's company from June 16 to July 10. When Lincoln was asked why he continued to re-enlist he said, "I was out of work and there was no danger of more fighting; I could do nothing better than enlist again."

Many people claim that Lincoln was a capable leader during the Black Hawk War, but some sources regard Lincoln as incompetent and ridiculed him. Certain members of his own company regarded him as a joke or absurdity, but never in malice. Many of the members of his company had "serious doubts about his courage." Some later confessed that they had elected Lincoln over Kirkpatrick merely because they would be able to do what they wanted under Lincoln. Despite these descriptions, Lincoln later described his military service as valuable.

The end of the Black Hawk War came in the Battle of Bad Axe when Black Hawk and his group of Indians attempted to cross the Mississippi River. In what some would call a "slaughter" the troops killed many of the Native American men, women, and



children as they emerged from the river on the other side, nearly eliminating the Sauk tribe. Lincoln returned home to New Salem after the war, on foot, because his horse had been stolen.

Lincoln learned valuable leadership and military skills that would later serve him well in the presidency, which was almost completely a wartime presidency. [From Robert P. Howard, *Illinois A History of the Prairie State*; Illinois State History Military Museum; *Captain Abraham Lincoln* <http://www.il.ngb.army.mil/Museum/HistPeople/Lincoln.htm> (Sept. 29, 2008); James Lewis, *The Black Hawk War of 1812*, <http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/blackhawk/scholarshipindex.html> (Sept. 29, 2008); and Wisconsin Historical Society; *Abraham Lincoln in the Black Hawk War*, <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/diary/002725.asp>.]

## **“He Said Many Great Things” – Lincoln Quotes**

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Sometimes it may be hard for us to believe that a man who was raised on a farm in Kentucky could become the President of the United States. Abraham Lincoln, a very intelligent man, is one of our most quoted presidents the United States has ever had; he has had more books written about him than any of our other presidents.

When Abraham Lincoln was a young boy, his mother passed away and his father remarried a woman name Sarah Bush. Sarah and Abraham were very fond of one another and Sarah once said, “He was the best boy I ever saw, I never gave him a cross word in all my life.” Abraham Lincoln’s response was, “All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.” Up until the day she died, Abraham and Sarah were very close.

In 1836, Abraham Lincoln became a lawyer, and, in a letter he wrote to other lawyers, Lincoln asked them to, “Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser- in fees, and expenses, and waste of time.” Lincoln understood how necessary it is to compromise in everyday life, even though he sometimes had trouble himself.

In some notes that Lincoln prepared for some other lawyers, he recommended forming the habit of diligence. Abraham Lincoln stated, “The leading rule for the lawyer, as for the man of every calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today.” Abraham Lincoln wanted them to be aware that hard work was a virtue.

On July 23, 1856, in Galena, Illinois, during one of Abraham Lincoln's debates with Douglas before he became president, he started talking about his plan to make slavery illegal. Abraham Lincoln said, "If you mean that it is our aim to dissolve the Union for myself, I answer, that is untrue; for those who act with me I answer, that it is untrue." Lincoln was addressing his remarks to his opponents in the Republican Party. He wanted others to know his intentions were not to make slavery illegal or to split up the Republicans and Democrats, but that he was simply doing it to make all of the slaves free.

A few years later in 1860, before becoming president, he spoke at Cooper Union in New York. Some think that if he had not given this speech, he may have never become president. Speaking from his heart Lincoln said, "As those fathers marked it, so let it be again marked." Abraham Lincoln was talking about slavery and how it is an evil that should never be tolerated. Slavery is not a necessity, even though others might think differently.

A reporter once wrote about Abraham Lincoln, "Washington was a typical American, but Lincoln was a humanitarian as broad as the world. He was bigger than his country- bigger than all the presidents together." He knew that because Abraham Lincoln refused to demonize the enemy. After Robert E. Lee surrendered, those in Washington wanted Lincoln to speak. "I have always thought 'Dixie' one of the best tunes I had ever heard. Our adversaries over the way attempted to appropriate it, but I insisted that we fairly capture it."

At his last cabinet meeting Lincoln hoped there would be no persecution, no blood shed after the war. He knew, "The best way to destroy an enemy was to make a

friend of him.” Perhaps Abraham Lincoln thought this because there was no room for revenge in his soul. Maybe it was because he realized that revenge was a dangerous, two-sided weapon; maybe he found a better way to work things out.

Abraham Lincoln spoke of dying in one of his last speeches. He said, “If they kill me, the next man will be just as bad for them; and in a country like this, where our habits are simple, and must be, assassination is always possible, and will come if they are determined upon it.” A few years later, in 1865, while attending a play in the Ford Theatre at Washing D.C., our sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln, was assassinated. Lincoln is thought to be one of the best presidents the United States has ever known, and none of us will let any American forget that fact. [From “Abraham Lincoln in Galena, Illinois.” Abraham Lincoln Online.

<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/sites/galena.html>. (Nov. 19, 2008);

Nina Brown Baker, *The Story of Abraham Lincoln*; Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*; Noah Brooks, *Lincoln Observed*; David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*; Harold Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*; “Lincoln Quotes: The Best Quotations.” Griessman, Gene.

<http://www.theamericans.us/Quote.html>. (Oct. 30, 2008); Stefan Lorant, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*; and Philip Van Doren Stern, *The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln*.]